ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: A SYNTHESIS OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Dinara Ulmasova

researcher of Samarkand branch of ISFT Institute, Uzbekistan

Abstract

This article explores the theoretical and pedagogical significance of phraseology in English language teaching. Phraseological units—idioms, collocations, and set expressions—reflect cultural values, social norms, and historical knowledge. Their mastery enhances learners' linguistic fluency and cultural competence. The article examines the semantic structure of phraseological units, classification of components, and effective teaching strategies. Emphasizing the interconnection between language and culture, it advocates for an integrated approach to phraseology instruction that combines semantic analysis, contextualization, and comparative methods. Phraseological competence is presented as essential for meaningful communication in English as a foreign language.

Keywords: phraseological units, idioms, language teaching, semantic decomposition, contextualization, comparative analysis, cultural connotations, interactive learning, lexical phrases, pedagogical strategies

Phraseology, the study of stable word combinations, has emerged as a critical domain in applied linguistics and language pedagogy. A phraseological unit (PU) is generally understood as a fixed or semi-fixed expression whose meaning cannot always be inferred from its individual components. These expressions include idioms, proverbs, collocations, and set phrases. Their study enables learners to decode cultural metaphors, social norms, and historical references embedded in language.

Despite their ubiquity in native discourse, phraseological units remain one of the most elusive aspects for language learners due to their figurative, often non-compositional, meanings. Their acquisition demands not only linguistic but also

cultural literacy. As such, phraseology is no longer viewed merely as a lexical phenomenon but as a cognitive and sociocultural tool, reinforcing the view that language and culture are inseparable.

Phraseological Units in Language Teaching: Importance and Challenges

Phraseological units, which include idioms, collocations, phrasal verbs, proverbs, and other fixed or semi-fixed expressions, are integral to mastering a foreign language. In English, such expressions are frequently used in both spoken and written discourse, often carrying meanings that cannot be directly inferred from the individual words. Therefore, the ability to understand and appropriately use phraseological units is essential for learners aiming to achieve fluency, accuracy, and native-like proficiency.

One of the main reasons phraseological units are important in language teaching is their role in fostering communicative competence. These units often convey specific cultural values, pragmatic meanings, and connotations that go beyond literal interpretation. For instance, idiomatic expressions like *"kick the bucket"* or *"let the cat out of the bag"* require both linguistic and cultural knowledge to be correctly understood and used. Teaching these expressions helps learners not only grasp the language but also gain insight into the worldview and social behaviors of native speakers.

In addition, phraseological units enrich learners' vocabulary and enhance their expressive capabilities. They provide alternative, often more colorful or nuanced, ways of expressing ideas. For example, rather than simply saying someone is "very happy," learners can say they are "on cloud nine" or "over the moon." Such usage reflects a deeper level of language mastery and allows learners to communicate more naturally and effectively.

Furthermore, the teaching of phraseology is often neglected in traditional language curricula, which tend to focus more on grammar and general vocabulary. As a result, learners may have a solid grammatical foundation but still struggle to

understand common expressions used in everyday conversation, literature, film, and media.

To overcome these challenges, language instruction must adopt a more integrated approach that incorporates phraseological units into all levels of teaching. This includes using context-rich materials, contrastive analysis with the students' native language, visual aids, and interactive activities like role plays or storytelling that naturally involve such expressions. Teachers should also encourage learners to keep personal phraseological dictionaries and practice using new expressions in various communicative contexts.

Semantic Structure of Phraseological Units

The semantic intricacy of PUs has prompted much scholarly debate, particularly on the nature and role of their components. A.V. Kunin and other influential linguists have argued that a phraseological unit must exhibit semantic unity, lexical fixity, and idiomaticity. Kunin classifies PUs into several categories based on how the meanings of individual components relate to the whole expression. These categories include:

- **Real words**: Components that retain their literal meanings.

- **Potential words**: Elements with attenuated or secondary meanings.

- **Former words**: Lexemes whose original meanings are no longer active.

- **Ghost words**: Components that no longer exist independently in the language.

For example, in the expression *to let the cat out of the bag*, the words *cat* and *bag* are "former" or "ghost" words in terms of semantics—they contribute little literal meaning but are essential to the idiom's integrity.

Linguists such as A.I. Molotkov and E.Kh. Rott further claim that phraseological components often lose grammatical and lexical independence, transforming into mere structural monemes. Conversely, scholars like V.V. Vinogradov and N.N. Amosova

argue for the partial semantic retention of components, noting that phraseological meaning arises from a complex synthesis rather than complete transformation.

Phraseology and Language-Culture Interrelation

Phraseological studies provide a unique lens through which to observe the symbiosis between language and culture. Idioms, metaphors, and fixed expressions often reflect collective memory, national character, and societal values. For example, idioms involving animals, weather, or food may reveal specific cultural practices or historical experiences.

The gnoseological function of phraseology—its role in knowledge formation—is particularly relevant in education. By learning idioms, students not only master vocabulary but also access the cultural codes of a speech community. As Zerkina (2011) notes, language cannot be fully understood without considering public opinion, value judgments, and social conventions. This aligns with the communicative and cultural approach in foreign language teaching, where linguistic instruction is integrated with sociocultural competence.

Methodological Approaches to Teaching Phraseology

The teaching of phraseological units (PUs) requires a multi-faceted and carefully balanced approach that integrates both theoretical understanding and practical application. Phraseological units are often idiomatic, culturally nuanced, and semantically complex, making their instruction more challenging than teaching individual vocabulary items. To address these challenges effectively, educators employ a variety of pedagogical strategies, each targeting specific aspects of phraseology learning:

- **Semantic Decomposition:** This approach involves breaking down the phraseological unit into its constituent parts and analyzing both the literal meanings of the individual words and the figurative meaning of the expression as a whole. By comparing the components' literal meanings with the overall

idiomatic sense, learners develop a clearer understanding of why the phrase behaves the way it does and how its meaning differs from a straightforward combination of words. This analysis sharpens learners' semantic awareness and helps prevent literal translation errors.

• **Contextualization:** One of the most essential methods for teaching phraseology is embedding expressions within realistic, relatable, and meaningful contexts. Instead of presenting idioms in isolation, teachers introduce them in dialogues, narratives, or authentic materials such as films, news reports, or literary excerpts. Contextualization helps learners infer meaning naturally and observe how phraseological units function pragmatically—how tone, register, and intention shape their use.

• **Comparative Analysis:** Given the cultural specificity of many idioms, comparative analysis is invaluable, especially in multilingual settings. This method involves comparing idiomatic expressions in the learner's native language with their equivalents or near-equivalents in the target language. Highlighting both similarities and differences helps learners grasp subtle semantic and cultural distinctions, reducing misunderstandings and fostering cross-linguistic competence.

• **Phraseological Identification:** A crucial skill for learners is to recognize phraseological units in running text or speech and distinguish them from free word combinations. Teaching this involves explicit instruction on the fixedness and idiomaticity criteria that differentiate PUs, along with practice exercises that require spotting idiomatic expressions in varied texts. This awareness aids both comprehension and productive use, as learners become more sensitive to multi-word units as lexical chunks.

• **Interactive Tasks:** Active engagement is key to internalizing phraseological units. Role-plays, idiom-based storytelling, translation exercises, and group discussions are effective interactive tasks that encourage learners to

produce idioms in communicative settings. Such activities promote fluency and help consolidate idiomatic expressions in learners' active vocabulary by providing meaningful usage opportunities.

In addition to these methods, teaching phraseological units should address their **connotative and evaluative dimensions**. Many idioms carry emotional or attitudinal overtones that reflect cultural values, social norms, or historical background. For example, the idiom *"to turn a blind eye"* implies intentional neglect or willful ignorance, which may not be immediately obvious to learners. Such connotations can affect the appropriateness and tone of usage and, if not explicitly taught, can lead to pragmatic misunderstandings or unintended offense. Therefore, educators should integrate cultural explanations and discussions of idiomatic nuances alongside semantic instruction.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Phraseology is an indispensable component of linguistic and cultural competence. Its study reveals how language encapsulates collective experience, encodes social values, and fosters identity. In language teaching, phraseological competence should be prioritized not only for fluency but also for deeper engagement with the target culture.

Future research may focus on corpus-based studies of PU frequency in spoken and written discourse, the development of cognitive models for PU acquisition, and cross-cultural comparisons of idiomatic frameworks. Pedagogically, the integration of digital tools and authentic media into phraseological instruction holds significant promise.

By merging theoretical insights with classroom practice, educators can empower students to navigate the richness of idiomatic English and participate more fully in intercultural communication.

References

1. Fernando, C. (1996). *Idioms and Idiomaticity*. Oxford University Press.

2. Moon, R. (1998). *Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English*. Oxford University Press.

3. Nattinger, J., & DeCarrico, J. (1992). *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press.

4. 1.   Muminovna, A. K. (2023). The role of translation in science. Texas Journal of Philology, Culture and History, 25, 60-62.

5. 2.   Mamatqulova, K. A., Amanullayeva, K. M., & qizi Shuhratova, V. J. Considerations for teaching Japanese literature.

6. 3.   Nafisa, K., & Matluba, D. (2023). PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS OF RESEARCH INTO THE PROBLEM OF BILINGUAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING. Conferencea, 31-34.

7. 4.   Tasheva D.S., Kubaeva N.A. Modern educational technologies in the aspect of a student-centered approach in teaching foreign languages. Eurasian Journal of Learning and Academic Teaching. Volume 12|, 2022. -p.35. www.geniusjournals.org

8. 5.   Kholbaeva D.D., Tasheva D.S. Pedagogical techniques and methods of forming interest in the lessons of the Russian language. Web of scientist: international scientific research journal, ISSN: 2776-0979, Volume 3, Issue 3, Mar., 2022. -p.238

9. 6.   Kholbaeva, D., & Tasheva, D. (2022). Theoretical And Practical Aspects Of Monitoring The Acquisition Of Knowledge, Skills And Abilities By Students In The Russian Language In Universities. Евразийский журнал социальных наук, философии и культуры, 2(11), 115-118.

10. 7.   Dilorom Tasheva. Approaches and principles of teaching Russian language. International Conference on Innovative Technology and Future Trends in Education. San Francisco, USA. July, 30th 2021. -p. 7. https://conferencea.org